

Congressman Scott Tipton
On the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives
June 5, 2013

Mr. Speaker I rise today with an amendment that cuts \$4 million from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), and provides those resources for small and rural airports that have had important passenger screening devices removed as a result of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Modernization Act. Passengers into rural airports in my district including Yampa Valley, Montrose, Gunnison and Durango, have been impacted by unnecessary delays and intrusions because of the removal of security screening devices that were sent to larger airports.

In the interest of protecting passenger privacy, the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012, required the use of Automated Target Recognition (ATR) scanners, or “gumby scanners” at all airports by June 1, 2012. While the intent of Congress was admirable and protecting the privacy of passengers should be a priority, TSA’s interpretation and implementation of the law has caused numerous problems for passengers traveling from small and rural airports throughout the country. One of TSA’s manufacturers who provided equipment for passenger screening could not comply with the changes in the law and provide the new equipment. As a result, TSA decided to remove 174 of these noncompliant machines throughout the country.

Rather than waiting for funding for new machines or finding alternative ways to fix this problem TSA made the arbitrary decision of taking compliant scanners from small and rural airports throughout the country and giving them to larger airports that lost their noncompliant scanners. One alternative could have been the cost-effective private-federal alternative screening model put forth by then House Transportation Chairman John Mica that would have saved billions of dollars and not compromised security at small and rural airports.

TSA’s implication that security checkpoints at small and rural airports are somehow less critical is inaccurate. Once passengers clear screening at small and rural airports they typically do not receive additional screening for connecting flights at other, potentially larger, airports.

The amendment will assist with reducing unnecessary delays for passengers at small and rural airports by providing funding to speed up the replacement of security equipment removed by TSA. It is important to note that the funds being redirected from TSA toward improving passenger screening at small airports come from its administrative budget, and as such do not impact passenger security.

There are numerous concerns with transparency and waste in the TSA budget including a recent agreement by TSA to purchase \$50 million worth of new uniforms that are unnecessary; wasting approximately \$212 million each year on the inefficient Spot program and billions on the Transportation Worker Identification Credential Program.

I believe that these resources could be better used to more efficiently screen passengers at small airports, strengthen security, and prevent delays and avoidable intrusions. I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this commonsense amendment.